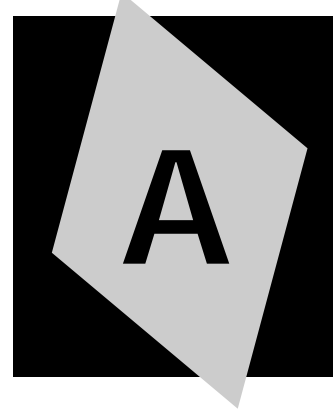


Hepatitis

For more information on hepatitis A

call the CDC Hepatitis Hotline or
International Health Hotline at
(404) 332-4555
or access the Internet at
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/
hepatitis/hepatitis.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/hepatitis.htm)
or
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.html>
or write
Hepatitis Branch, Mailstop G37
Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases
National Center for Infectious Diseases
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
Atlanta, GA 30333



Prevention

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused
by the hepatitis A virus.

Hepatitis A can affect anyone. In
the United States, hepatitis A can
occur in situations ranging from
isolated cases of disease to
widespread epidemics.

Good personal hygiene and proper
sanitation can help prevent hepatitis
A. Vaccines are also available for
long-term prevention of hepatitis A
virus infection in persons 2 years of
age and older. Immune globulin is
available for short-term prevention
of hepatitis A virus infection in all
ages.



January 1997



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
& HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service

How do you get hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is found in the stool of
persons with hepatitis A. HAV is usually
spread from person to person by putting
something in the mouth that has been
contaminated with the stool of a person with
hepatitis A. For this reason, the virus is more
easily spread in areas where there are poor
sanitary conditions or where good personal
hygiene is not observed.

Persons with hepatitis A can spread the virus
to others who live in the same household or
with whom they have sexual contact.
**Casual contact as in the usual office,
factory or school setting, does not spread
the virus.**

Who is at risk for hepatitis A?

- ◆ Persons who share a household or have
sex contact with someone who has
hepatitis A
- ◆ Travelers to countries where
hepatitis A is common and
where clean water and
proper
sewage
disposal are
not available



- ◆ Men who have sex with men
- ◆ Persons who use street drugs
- ◆ Children and employees in child care
centers (especially centers that have
children in diapers) where a child or an
employee has hepatitis A



- ◆ Residents and staff of institutions for
developmentally disabled persons when
a resident or an employee has hepatitis A
- ◆ Workers who handle HAV-infected
animals or work with HAV in a research
laboratory setting. (This does not
include laboratories doing routine
testing)
- ◆ Persons with clotting factor disorders who
receive factor concentrates

How do you know if you have hepatitis A?

Three of every four adults who get hepatitis A have symptoms that usually develop over a period of several days. Children who are infected often have no symptoms.

If you have symptoms

- ◆ your eyes may turn yellow and you may have dark urine
- ◆ you may be tired
- ◆ you may lose your appetite
- ◆ you may have nausea, vomiting, fever, or stomach ache

A person can spread HAV about one week before symptoms appear and during the first week of symptoms. Persons with no symptoms can still spread the virus. This often happens with young children who unknowingly spread HAV to older children and adults.

Unlike hepatitis B and hepatitis C, hepatitis A causes no long-term liver damage and usually does not cause death. There is no chronic carrier state with hepatitis A. Having had the disease produces lifelong immunity from future HAV infection.



How can you prevent hepatitis A?

You should always wash your hands after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before eating or preparing food.

Hepatitis A vaccines provide long-term protection against hepatitis A and are licensed for use in persons **2 years of age and older**.

Children and adults need two shots of hepatitis A vaccine for long-term protection. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to return for the second shot.

Immune globulin, a preparation of antibodies, is recommended for short-term protection against Hepatitis A and for persons who have already been exposed to HAV. Immune globulin must be given within two weeks of exposure to HAV for maximum protection. As immune globulin is in short supply, vaccine is preferred for travelers 2 years of age and older.

Who should receive hepatitis A vaccine?

- ◆ Persons who work in or travel to areas where hepatitis A is common (first dose should be given at least 4 weeks before travel)
- ◆ Children in communities with high rates of hepatitis A, such as Alaska Native villages, American Indian reservations, and Pacific Islander and selected religious communities.
- ◆ Men who have sex with men
- ◆ Persons who use street drugs
- ◆ Persons with chronic liver disease
- ◆ Persons with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophilia
- ◆ Persons who work with HAV-infected animals or work with HAV in a research setting (hepatitis A vaccine is not generally recommended for health care workers).

Can you get hepatitis A from food or water?

In addition to getting hepatitis A directly from infected people, you can get hepatitis A by:

- ◆ swallowing contaminated water or ice
- ◆ eating raw shellfish harvested from sewage-contaminated water
- ◆ eating fruits, vegetables, or other food that may have become contaminated during handling.

Can HAV be killed?

The virus is killed by boiling at 85 degrees C (185 degrees F) for 1 minute. However, the disease can still be spread by cooked foods if they are contaminated after cooking. Adequate chlorination of water, as recommended in the United States, kills HAV.